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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



[The Editor is not responsible for opinions expressed in this Department.]

DEAR EDITOR: I wish the leaders in the general discussion of nurse training, now busy in writing up professionalism, preparatory schools, State registration, etc., etc., would turn their bright minds upon the question of what to do with unworthy graduates, how to guard even an ordinary training-school, to say nothing of a State register, from the discredit of young women who are disgracing their diplomas. No school in the country is without its unworthy graduates, women who have entered the hospitals on credentials as to general excellence which cannot be gone behind, women who perform their duties creditably, pass their examinations well, and, successfully eluding the watchful eye of officers, carry off their diplomas after two or three years of *hospital* training, and reveal in *family* practice their selfish unfitness to be trusted in a sickroom. Such women are careful to join some nurses' club, some *alumnæ* association, where an *esprit de corps* refuses to accept any statement to their discredit and resents any unfavorable criticism. Women of this class, falling back on the testimonials which first introduce them to the hospital, indorsed by the *alumnæ*, holding a diploma, and passing any examination as to their intelligent knowledge of their profession, would certainly be admitted to State registration, and, doubly indorsed, be let loose on the helpless public. What would you propose as a remedy for this state of things, which exist now in every training-school, if the truth were known? It is useless to say, be more careful about the selection of pupils and more strict as to requirements for graduation. Such cases would not be touched by these precautions. They are generally smart women who have been politic enough to do well till their diploma is secured, and who as private nurses disgrace their schools.

The trouble does not "correct itself;" families worry along with the nurse and are thankful to get rid of her on any terms when her engagement ends. They will not embroil themselves with her by complaints, and so she carries her selfish "professionalism," her opium and gin habit, into other distressed homes. What redress has a school under such circumstances?

All other professions have means of ridding themselves of unworthy members. Even the Stock Exchange expels a man for questionable practices, lawyers are disbarred, and physicians are turned out of medical associations. Graduate nurses only flourish their diplomas, and pursue their unlovely way.

In the interests of a long-suffering public, the whole question deserves the careful consideration of the bright women who lead and grace their profession. The protection of the trained nurse by associations and journals and professional regulations of all sorts is all very well, but how is society to be protected from the trained nurse?

A MEMBER OF A TRAINING-SCHOOL COMMITTEE.

DEAR EDITOR: The subject of non-graduate nurses seems to be occupying the minds of both the medical and nursing professions just now. It seems to me

they have their place as well as we. Looking at the subject from the people's standpoint, it seems rather hard lines for a man who is supporting his family upon from fifteen to thirty dollars per week to be forced to employ a nurse who charges fifteen dollars per week (at the very least) to take care of his wife if she chance to be attacked by some trifling illness. Many times all that is required is to keep the patient clean and comfortable and to administer food and medicine according to the doctor's directions. It certainly is not wise for a nurse to charge less than the usual fee for such cases, yet I am sure I should feel very uncomfortable many times in accepting my fee did I not know there were non-professional nurses in the city who could be procured for less money. It certainly should be against the law for them to claim to be graduates, but I hope, for the sake of the people, the time will never come when they may not be employed.

I would appreciate it very much, and think perhaps there are others who would also appreciate it, if diet-lists were published in the JOURNAL suitable for special cases,—Bright's disease, stomach troubles, etc.

A NEW SUBSCRIBER.

[Such a list was published in the November, 1900, number of the JOURNAL.—Ed.]

DETROIT, MICH., February 8, 1903.

DEAR EDITOR: In view of the fact that a movement is on foot to establish laws to regulate the practice of nursing, it may be well to call attention to the desirability of making the laws in the various States uniform, so that nurses who intend to change their location may not meet with unnecessary difficulties. You are undoubtedly aware that the medical practice acts vary considerably, and that much annoyance is caused thereby. I think that it is easier to establish uniform laws from the beginning than to change all individual laws afterwards in order to make them equal to those of other States.

EMIL AMBERG, M.D.

DEAR EDITOR: There is one subject which I have not seen mentioned in the JOURNAL,—namely, the dignified maintenance of nurses who are too old or who have become incapacitated, through loss of robust health, so that they are not able to do professional work.

Not long ago in a weekly journal I saw an advertisement to this effect: "A trained nurse in New York City would be glad to give her services for a part of the night in return for board, laundry, and a small compensation."

In the same journal I frequently see advertisements stating that a trained nurse would like a position as companion or as a nursery governess or to take care of an infant under a year old, and when I read them I always feel irritated. But, on the other hand, probably the women who advertise are in urgent need of employment, and, of course, to have had a nurse's training would be in their favor in securing the above-named positions. Also I have heard it stated by a prominent physician that a nurse ought not, as so many of them do, to engage herself to a maternity case for three months. He held that neither mother nor child, in a normal case, could be considered a patient after the lapse of four weeks, and that it was as undignified for a nurse to accept money for other than professional services as it would be for a lawyer or a physician to do so.

I would be glad to have your opinion on these subjects.

I wish to express my appreciation of the JOURNAL. I have renewed my subscription to it with the feeling that I could not well get along without it. Aside from its evident educational value, it forms a pleasant social bond. I must confess that I always look first at the report of the "Guild of St. Barnabas," and then at the "Hospital and Training-School Items," to see what news I can find of my friends. Nurses are, as a rule, too busy for much correspondence, yet it is pleasant to know what is happening to one's workmates, and the JOURNAL often brings welcome news.

SUSAN B. JOHNSON.

[From a strictly professional standpoint we think the doctor is right, but, on the other hand, trained care during the first three months of a child's life may make a vigorous man out of puny material. Many nurses feel that such cases give them a rest from worry, which makes it possible for them to work longer years without loss of money, which seems justifiable.—ED.]

DEAR EDITOR: Ever since the JOURNAL came into existence I have been a subscriber and reader, and as I have been far away from hospital centres and nursing fields, I have welcomed its monthly appearance with delight, feeling that it was helping to raise my standard and to renew my earlier ambitions and desires. I have also been keen to send some little helping word that would assist some other nurse who is battling with disease, filth, etc. Prominent among my early struggles in the small hospital of which I have control were those with vermin, and I learned the value of Sabadilla. Rubbed well into the roots of the hair, it kills them off miraculously, and one need feel no fear of going near a patient after the Sabadilla has been applied, as it gets in its deadly work at once. I sing its praises, for it has saved me many a heartache. As it is only ten cents an ounce, its cheapness will recommend it. I have never found any vermin on an Italian, with one exception, although the peasant type are famous for their filth and unkemptness, but the Swedes, Cornish, and lower-class Americans team with them.

Perhaps it would be wise to relate a little experience we had in the hospital with picric acid.

A man was burned by the explosion of a gasoline tank, and as quickly as he could immersed himself in a hogshead of water, then hurried to a doctor's office. The patient was suffering intensely, and the doctor made a solution of picric acid in a pail and plunged the man's arms in it and deluged the other portions of the body that were burned with it. The next day the patient grew steadily worse, and on the following day was admitted to the hospital. I secured a sample of urine, which was a very dark coffee color, and the physician said immediately the man was poisoned, and was suffering from the poisoning, and not from the burns, as supposed. I hastily bathed the patient and endeavored to get off all the picric acid, gave normal saline solution subcutaneously and in enemas, but to no avail, the patient rapidly becoming delirious and dying shortly in great agony.

M. R. M. B.

DEAR EDITOR: Naturally, among the nurses of our State who have neither had nor made an opportunity to follow the proceedings of the New York State Nurses' Association during the nearly completed two years of its existence there

exists some bewilderment as regards the present state of things in our efforts to procure legislation. Therefore, through the pages of the JOURNAL we seek some information regarding Miss Nye, whom we understand to be the originator of the opposition.

Is this true, and, if so, who is she as regards our profession? Where did she graduate from and when, and in what line has she since pursued her work?

When one individual leads an opposition against an organized body of the representative women of a certain profession it is quite proper that one should inform herself upon all sides; hence my query. C. N. E.

[We have never had occasion to investigate or to doubt Miss Nye's professional record. She is said to be a graduate of a training-school in Indianapolis, Ind.; the name of the school and the date of graduation we are unable to give. We know her at one time to have held the position of night superintendent at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia, and to have been in charge of a small private hospital in Buffalo. She has not been engaged in nursing work of late years, but has been in the employ of the New York Life Insurance Company, soliciting among nurses.

Miss Nye was among the first to take an active interest in registration. She was the first president of the New York State Nurses' Association, but was not nominated for reelection, since which time she has led an exceedingly small but very bitter opposition. Miss Nye is an able woman, but from her attitude one must infer that she has been too long out of touch with the higher educational progress in nursing to be able to appreciate the aspirations of the New York State Nurses' Association in its efforts to place training-schools and trained nurses under the supervision of the Regents.—ED.]

[LETTERS to the Editor must be accompanied by the name in full and address of the writer, otherwise such communications cannot be recognized. The name need not appear in the JOURNAL unless so desired.—ED.]



ORGANIZATION OF NURSES.—At the annual meeting of the Medical Society of the State of New York mention was made of the fact that a bill was to be introduced into the Legislature asking that trained nurses be licensed by the State in accordance with rules prescribed by the Board of Regents. The speaker was of the opinion that this movement was wise, timely, and in good hands, and deserved the hearty support of this society. He advised that the matter be referred to the Committee on Legislation, with instructions to support the measure in the Legislature in every way possible.

THE LEGAL REGISTRATION OF NURSES.—A bill is shortly to be introduced at Albany, on behalf of the New York State Nurses' Association, to provide for the supervision of all training-schools for nurses by the State Board of Regents. It is understood that a minimum course of two years in an incorporated hospital or training-school will be a *sine quâ non* to the attainment of a diploma. It is hoped by this measure to put a stop to persons posing as trained nurses after a few months' work in private and often ill-qualified sanitariums.—*New York Medical Journal*.